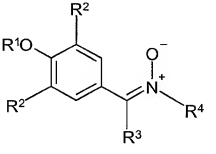
WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

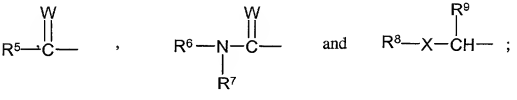
1. A method for treating neuropathic pain is a patient comprising administering an effective neuropathic pain-treating dose of a pharmaceutical composition comprising a compound of formula I:



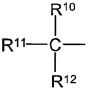
I

wherein

R^1 is selected from the group consisting of hydrogen, alkyl



each R^2 is independently selected from a group of the formula:



R^3 is selected from the group consisting of hydrogen, alkyl, cycloalkyl and aryl;

R^4 is selected from the group consisting of alkyl, substituted alkyl, alkenyl, substituted alkenyl, alkynyl, substituted alkynyl, cycloalkyl, substituted cycloalkyl, cycloalkenyl and substituted cycloalkenyl;

R^5 is selected from the group consisting of alkyl, substituted alkyl, alkenyl, substituted alkenyl, alkynyl, substituted alkynyl, cycloalkyl, substituted cycloalkyl, cycloalkenyl and substituted cycloalkenyl;

R^6 and R^7 are independently selected from the group consisting of hydrogen, alkyl, substituted alkyl, alkenyl, substituted alkenyl, alkynyl, substituted alkynyl, cycloalkyl, substituted cycloalkyl, cycloalkenyl and substituted cycloalkenyl; or R^6 and R^7 can be joined to form an alkylene or substituted alkylene group having from 2 to 10 carbon atoms;

R^8 is selected from the group consisting of alkyl, substituted alkyl, alkenyl, substituted alkenyl, alkynyl, substituted alkynyl, cycloalkyl, substituted cycloalkyl, cycloalkenyl and substituted cycloalkenyl;

R^9 is selected from the group consisting of hydrogen, alkyl, substituted alkyl, alkenyl, substituted alkenyl, alkynyl, substituted alkynyl, cycloalkyl, substituted cycloalkyl, cycloalkenyl and substituted cycloalkenyl; or R^8 and R^9 can be joined to form an alkylene or substituted alkylene group having from 2 to 10 carbon atoms;

R^{10} is selected from the group consisting of hydrogen, lower alkyl and lower cycloalkyl; or R^1 and R^{10} can be joined to form an alkylene, substituted alkylene, -C(O)- -S(O)- or -$S(O)_2$- group;

R^{11} and R^{12} are independently selected from the group consisting of lower alkyl and lower cycloalkyl; or R^{11} and R^{12} can be joined to form an alkylene group having from 2 to 10 carbon atoms;

X is oxygen, sulfur, -S(O)- or -$S(O)_2$-; and

W is oxygen or sulfur; and pharmaceutically-acceptable salts thereof.

2. The method of Claim 1 wherein *W* is oxygen.

3. The method of Claim 2 wherein R^3 is hydrogen or lower alkyl.

4. The method of Claim 3 wherein R^3 is hydrogen.

5. The method of Claim 4 wherein R^4 is selected from the group consisting of alkyl, substituted alkyl and cycloalkyl.

6. The method of Claim 5 wherein R^4 is selected from the group consisting of methyl, *n*-propyl, isopropyl, 1-hydroxy-2-methylprop-2-yl, *n*-butyl, *tert*-butyl, 3-thiomethylpropyl, 3-(thiomethoxy)but-1-yl, cyclohexyl, 4-trifluoromethybenzyl and 3,4,5-trimethoxybenzyl.

7. The method of Claim 4 wherein R^5 is selected from the group consisting of alkyl and cycloalkyl.

8. The method of Claim 7 wherein R^5 is selected from the group consisting of methyl, ethyl, *n*-propyl, isopropyl and *n*-butyl.

9. The method of Claim 4 wherein R^7 is hydrogen and R^6 is selected from the group consisting of alkyl and alkoxycarbonylalkyl.

10. The method of Claim 9 wherein R^6 groups is selected from the group consisting of ethyl, *n*-propyl, isopropyl, *n*-butyl, ethoxycarbonylmethyl and 2-(ethoxycarbonyl)ethyl.

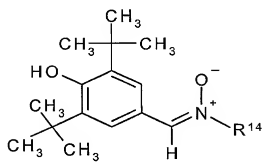
11. The method of Claim 4 wherein X is oxygen; R^9 is hydrogen; and R^8 is alkyl or alkoxyalkyl.

12. The method of Claim 11 wherein R^8 is selected from the group consisting of methyl and methoxyethyl.

13. The method of Claim 4 wherein R^{10}, R^{11} and R^{12} are independently lower alkyl.

14. The of Claim 13 wherein R^{10}, R^{11} and R^{12} are methyl.

15. The method of Claim 1 wherein the compound is of formula IA:



IA

wherein

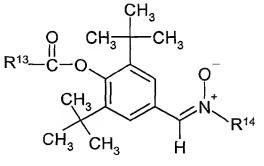
R^{14} is selected from the group consisting of alkyl, substituted alkyl, cycloalkyl and substituted cycloalkyl.

16. The method of Claim 15 wherein R^{14} is an alkyl of from 3 to 8 carbon atoms.

17. The method of Claim 16 wherein R^{14} is *tert*-butyl.

18. The method of Claim 16 wherein R^{14} is *tert*-octyl.

19. The method of Claim 1 wherein the compound is of formula II:



II

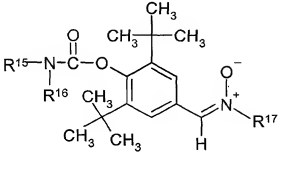
wherein

R^{13} is selected from the group consisting of alkyl, substituted alkyl, cycloalkyl and substituted cycloalkyl;

R^{14} is selected from the group consisting of alkyl, substituted alkyl, cycloalkyl and substituted cycloalkyl; and pharmaceutically-acceptable salts thereof.

20. The method of Claim 15 wherein R^{13} is lower alkyl and R^{14} is selected from the group consisting of alkyl, substituted alkyl and cycloalkyl.

21. The method of Claim 1 wherein the compound is of formula III:



III

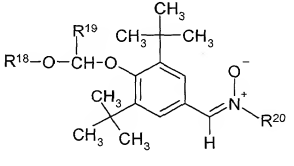
wherein

R^{15} and R^{16} are independently selected from the group consisting of hydrogen, alkyl, substituted alkyl, cycloalkyl, substituted cycloalkyl; or R^{15} and R^{16} can be joined to form an alkylene or substituted alkylene group having from 2 to 10 carbon atoms;

R^{17} is selected from the group consisting of alkyl, substituted alkyl, cycloalkyl and substituted cycloalkyl; and pharmaceutically-acceptable salts thereof.

22. The method of Claim 21 wherein R^{16} is hydrogen and R^{15} is selected from the group consisting of alkyl and alkoxycarbonylalkyl.

23. The method of Claim 1 wherein the compound is of formula IV:



IV

wherein

R^{18} is selected from the group consisting of alkyl, substituted alkyl, cycloalkyl and substituted cycloalkyl;

R^{19} is selected from the group consisting of hydrogen, alkyl, substituted alkyl, cycloalkyl and substituted cycloalkyl; or R^{18} and R^{19} can be joined to form an alkylene or substituted alkylene group having from 2 to 10 carbon atoms;

R^{20} is selected from the group consisting of alkyl, substituted alkyl,

cycloalkyl and substituted cycloalkyl; and pharmaceutically-acceptable salts thereof.

24. The method of Claim 23 wherein R^{19} is hydrogen and R^{18} is alkyl or alkoxyalkyl.

25. The method of Claim 24 wherein R^{18} is methyl or methoxyethyl.

26. The method of Claim 23 wherein R^{20} is selected from the group consisting of alkyl, substituted alkyl and cycloalkyl.

27. The method of Claim 26 wherein R^{20} is selected from the group consisting of methyl, *n*-propyl, isopropyl, 1-hydroxy-2-methylprop-2-yl, *n*-butyl, *tert*-butyl, 3-thiomethylpropyl, 3-(thiomethoxy)but-1-yl, cyclohexyl, 4-trifluoromethybenzyl and 3,4,5-trimethoxybenzyl.

28. The method of Claim 1 wherein the compound is selected from the group consisting of:

α-(4-acetoxy-3,5-di-*tert*-butylphenyl)-*N*-*tert*-butylnitrone

α-(4-isobutanoyloxy-3,5-di-*tert*-butylphenyl)-*N*-*tert*-butylnitrone

α-(4-*n*-butanoyloxy-3,5-di-*tert*-butylphenyl)-*N*-*tert*-butylnitrone

α-(4-acetoxy-3,5-di-*tert*-butylphenyl)-*N*-isopropylnitrone

α-(4-acetoxy-3,5-di-*tert*-butylphenyl)-*N*-1-hydroxy-2-methylprop-2-ylnitrone

α-(4-*n*-pentanoyloxy-3,5-di-*tert*-butylphenyl)-*N*-*tert*-butylnitrone

α-(4-acetoxy-3,5-di-*tert*-butylphenyl)-*N*-4-trifluoromethylbenzylnitrone

α-(4-propionyloxy-3,5-di-*tert*-butylphenyl)-*N*-*tert*-butylnitrone

α-(4-acetoxy-3,5-di-*tert*-butylphenyl)-*N*-methylnitrone

α-(4-acetoxy-3,5-di-*tert*-butylphenyl)-*N*-3,4,5-trimethoxybenzylnitrone

α-[4-(ethylaminocarbonyloxy)-3,5-di-*tert*-butylphenyl]-*N*-*tert*-butylnitrone

α-[4-(*n*-propylaminocarbonyloxy)-3,5-di-*tert*-butylphenyl]-*N*-*tert*-butylnitrone

α-[4-(*n*-butylaminocarbonyloxy)-3,5-di-*tert*-butylphenyl]-*N*-*tert*-butylnitrone

α-[4-(2-ethoxycarbonyl)ethylaminocarbonyloxy)-3,5-di-*tert*-butylphenyl]-*N*-*tert*-butylnitrone

α-[4-(2-ethoxycarbonyl)methylaminocarbonyloxy)-3,5-di-*tert*-butylphenyl]-*N*-*tert*-butylnitrone

α-(4-methoxymethoxy-3,5-di-*tert*-butylphenyl)-*N*-*tert*-butylnitrone

α-[4-(2-methoxy)ethoxymethoxy-3,5-di-*tert*-butylphenyl]-*N*-*tert*-butylnitrone

α-(4-methoxymethoxy-3,5-di-*tert*-butylphenyl)-*N*-3-(thiomethoxy)but-1-ylnitrone

α-(4-methoxymethoxy-3,5-di-*tert*-butylphenyl)-*N*-3-thiomethoxypropylnitrone

α-(4-hydroxy-3,5-di-*tert*-butylphenyl)-*N*-*tert*-butylnitrone

α-(4-hydroxy-3,5-di-*tert*-butylphenyl)-*N*-*tert*-octylnitrone

α-(4-hydroxy-3,5-dimethoxyphenyl)-N-tert-butylnitrone

α-(4-hydroxy-3,5-dimethylphenyl)-N-hexylnitrone

α-(4-hydroxy-3,5-dimethylphenyl)-N-tert-butylnitrone

α-(4-hydroxy-3,5-di-tert-butylphenyl)-N-(1,1-dimethyl-2-hydroxyethyl)nitrone

α-(4-hydroxy-3,5-di-tert-butylphenyl)-N-(1,1-dimethylpropyl)lnitrone

α-(4-hydroxy-3,5-di-tert-butylphenyl)-N-(1-methylethyl)lnitrone

α-(4-hydroxy-3,5-di-tert-butylphenyl)-N-benzylnitrone

α-(4-methoxy-3,5-di-*tert*-butylphenyl)-*N*-*tert*-butylnitrone

and pharmaceutically acceptable salts thereof.

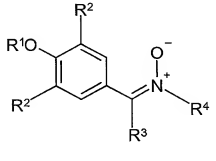
29. The method of Claim 1 wherein the compound is α-(4-hydroxy-3,5-di-*tert*-butylphenyl)-*N*-*tert*-butylnitrone

30. The method of Claim 1 wherein the compound is α-(4-hydroxy-3,5-di-*tert*-butylphenyl)-*N*-*tert*-octylnitrone

31. The method of Claim 1 wherein the compound is α-(4-acetoxy-3,5-di-*tert*-butylphenyl)-*N*-*tert*-octylnitrone

32. The method of Claim 1 wherein the compound is α-(4-*n*-butanoyloxy-3,5-di-*tert*-butylphenyl)-*N*-*tert*-butylnitrone

33. A pharmaceutical composition for the treatment of neuropathic pain comprising a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier and a pharmaceutically effective neuropathic pain-treating amount of a compound of formula I:

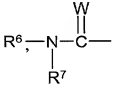


I

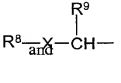
wherein

R^1 is selected from the group consisting of hydrogen:

;



and



each R^2 is independently selected from a group of the formula:

R^3 is selected from the group consisting of hydrogen, alkyl, cycloalkyl and aryl;

R^4 is selected from the group consisting of alkyl, substituted alkyl, alkenyl, substituted alkenyl, alkynyl, substituted alkynyl, cycloalkyl, substituted cycloalkyl, cycloalkenyl and substituted cycloalkenyl;

R^5 is selected from the group consisting of alkyl, substituted alkyl, alkenyl, substituted alkenyl, alkynyl, substituted alkynyl, cycloalkyl, substituted cycloalkyl, cycloalkenyl and substituted cycloalkenyl;

R^6 and R^7 are independently selected from the group consisting of hydrogen, alkyl, substituted alkyl, alkenyl, substituted alkenyl, alkynyl, substituted alkynyl, cycloalkyl, substituted cycloalkyl, cycloalkenyl and substituted cycloalkenyl; or R^6 and R^7 can be joined to form an alkylene or substituted alkylene group having from 2 to 10 carbon atoms;

R^8 is selected from the group consisting of alkyl, substituted alkyl, alkenyl, substituted alkenyl, alkynyl, substituted alkynyl, cycloalkyl, substituted cycloalkyl, cycloalkenyl and substituted cycloalkenyl;

R^9 is selected from the group consisting of hydrogen, alkyl, substituted alkyl, alkenyl, substituted alkenyl, alkynyl, substituted alkynyl, cycloalkyl,

substituted cycloalkyl, cycloalkenyl and substituted cycloalkenyl; or R^8 and R^9 can be joined to form an alkylene or substituted alkylene group having from 2 to 10 carbon atoms;

R^{10} is selected from the group consisting of hydrogen, lower alkyl and lower cycloalkyl; or R^1 and R^{10} can be joined to form an alkylene, substituted alkylene, -C(O)- -S(O)- or -$S(O)_2$- group;

R^{11} and R^{12} are independently selected from the group consisting of lower alkyl and lower cycloalkyl; or R^{11} and R^{12} can be joined to form an alkylene group having from 2 to 10 carbon atoms;

X is oxygen, sulfur, -S(O)- or -$S(O)_2$-; and

W is oxygen or sulfur; and pharmaceutically-acceptable salts thereof.

34. The pharmaceutical composition of Claim 33 wherein the compound is α-(4-hydroxy-3,5-di-*tert*-butylphenyl)-*N*-*tert*-butylnitrone.

35. The pharmaceutical composition of Claim 33 wherein the compound is α-(4-hydroxy-3,5-di-*tert*-butylphenyl)-*N*-*tert*-octylnitrone.